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ANALYSIS DISTRIBUTION SEARCH

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SERIES B

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FROM : Amembassy ACCRA

DATE: May 10, 1964

SUBJECT : NIS General Survey

Document No.
Review of this document by CIA has determined that

REF : Department's A-66, March 26, 1964

☒ CIA has no objection to declass interest that must remain classified at TS S C

Authority: HR 10-2

☐ It contains nothing of CIA interest

Reviewer 059485

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HUGHES

SUMMARY

26 NOV 1980

Accra regards the new emphasis on the one-volume NIS General Survey as an improvement, although the system should continue to be reviewed for possible refinements. A loose-leaf format or a system of periodic supplements might be considered in order to meet the problem of keeping the General Survey up to date. On the other hand, a comparison of the relative usefulness of the NIS General Survey and of the SORO Handbooks suggests that the latter may actually be more useful in some cases, ~~depending on circumstances~~. The post would appreciate receiving General Surveys produced for adjacent and nearby countries.

We believe that the new approach to the NIS, placing emphasis on the one-volume general surveys rather than on the many specialized sections, represents a definite improvement. The old sections were often so out of date that they were of little use in the Foreign Service. The General Survey, on the other hand, is a useful document for briefing and most reference purposes and strikes a good balance in the amount of detail provided. We recognize, of course, that detailed sections of the familiar type will still be required to fill specialized needs.

Timeliness still represents a very basic problem with the NIS, however. In the General Survey for Ghana, as an example, the economic chapter (No. 6) accurately reflects the situation as it was a few months ago but no longer presents a completely true picture of Ghana's economy.

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ECON:JWFoley (in draft)

This document contains information of a confidential nature

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The political situation has also moved into another stage. Thus, while the material provides an extremely good background introduction for anyone who is not familiar with the area or whose knowledge is highly specialized in one field, it still needs to be supplemented by more current materials. Even the map, which has a particularly good topographical representation, fails to show some of the changes that have taken place in the system of major roads. (The road from Yendi to Bawku is not accurately shown despite the submission of maps and Army Attache reports with changes that are now more than two years old. The map is still an excellent one, however, and I would very much like to see an unclassified version published for official desk use.)

I am not certain that the problem of timing can be solved easily for many of the lesser developed countries, since the pace of economic, political, and social change is often so rapid that almost any kind of report is out of date within a relatively short time. This raises the question whether the three-year cycle of revisions for the General Survey will be adequate. While it would probably be impracticable to do a complete revision of the survey more frequently, since each survey represents a great deal of production and publication effort, it might be useful to consider making them loose-leaf and instituting a program of producing replacement pages as needed. Although this too would involve certain difficulties, as the more subtle and pervasive changes that take place in the economic or political sphere cannot always be taken care of by a few simple amendments, it might be worth an attempt. ~~covered by~~

Another alternative for countries where changes are frequent might be an annual or semi-annual supplement that could be inserted at the end of each chapter or section. These would provide brief reviews of important developments or changes that have taken place since the basic survey was produced or since the last supplement. Like some of the annual supplements produced for encyclopedias, the NIS supplement could be accompanied by paste-in cross reference tabs that would tell readers of the basic document when they should also consult the supplement for updated information.

For us, the NIS General Survey on Ghana, when used in connection with more recent intelligence analyses, country policy studies and other current materials, is of primary value as an excellent source of information for the briefing and orientation of personnel who must be made thoroughly familiar with this country. It is also useful for occasional reference, although for this purpose we are more likely to consult our files if we need any considerable detail. For briefing purposes, therefore, we find it competes with the Army's Special Warfare Area Handbook for Ghana prepared by the Special Operations Research Office (SORO) at American University, which we find almost as good and in some cases better than the actual NIS. Its evaluations are not as well considered but it is somewhat more comprehensive than the General Survey. If the name were changed (Area Handbook would seem to have been quite sufficient; we keep our copies locked up when not in use), it would have the tremendous advantage of being unclassified. Although it has the same problem of timeliness as the

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NIS, it too might be supplemented by current materials. Moreover, much of what the NIS gains by the inclusion of classified materials (at least in the field of current economic and political problems) is lost as it becomes dated. In other words, a comprehensive unclassified handbook (especially if it could be published "privately" so that the authors could be relatively frank in the presentation of facts and analysis) would be more useful than a study with classified material that may no longer be especially pertinent.

In response to the specific question in A-66, we believe that it would be useful if the Embassy could be supplied with the General Surveys produced for adjacent and nearby countries. (We already have SORO Handbooks for Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and the Congo). Because of the need to report on Ghana's relations with so many African countries, it would be useful to have here a collection of all the General Surveys for West Africa, plus those for such other key African countries as the Department may consider suitable. These would make a valuable addition to the post's collection of classified reference files.

William P. Mahoney, Jr.
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